

President Talks To His People

As a tailored speech, President Eisenhower's report to the nation on the U-2 episode was a flawless, dispassionate, short, pertinent sentence. The summary of the administration's defense of the episode, which is credited by his critics with wrecking the summit conference.

It said in effect:
— We were absolutely right in sending airplanes over Russia because we learned that it is essential to the defense of America.

— We accept full responsibility for the failure of this particular flight, and for the confusing announcements that followed.

— We have discontinued such missions because they are no longer useful and, besides, they upset some of our allies.

— So as to give confident defense of policy, the Wednesday night script was adequate.

We had hoped for more — an admission, perhaps, of error; a clearer explanation of just what really happened; an assurance of closer purview of the activities of the Central Intelligence Agency.

But this was not apology; this, from the President's viewpoint, was pure justification.

The speech had a positive side.

— We're willing to continue negotiations with Russia despite the collapse of the summit conference.

— We're ready to donate the U-2 planes and other aircraft to a U.N.-administered, non-partisan inspection system.

Both offers are generous.

Both will help reassure our free world allies that the United States is genuinely interested in the establishment of a just world peace.

Both exclude the myth planted by the Kremlin propagandists that the United States is bent on aggression and that the U-2 is an instrument of aggression.

We half expected the President to voice some sadness over his shattered dream of leaving the White House as a man who successfully sought peace.

We half expected him, also, to express his dismay over the rudeness and crudity of Khrushchev's Paris performance.

That he did neither gave added strength and dignity to his address.

There will come a time when the record of this strange period is finally written.

Until then, concerned though we may be, the American people can only put their faith in the wisdom of Mr. Eisenhower and the adequacy of his information sources.

We can hope, too, that the coming debate over the summit failure, a debate which was in no way set aside by the President's address, will be conducted fairly and responsibly with national security the end objective rather than partisan political profit.

And if we may add a footnote, with the kindest of intentions, we do wish the President would get his glasses fixed. Some of us were so preoccupied in watching them slip down his nose repeatedly that we lost whole sentences of the talk.